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SERVICE DATE - AUGUST 6,1999

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

WASHINGTON, DC 20423

## ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

AB-6 (SUB-NO.382X)

BURLINGTON NORTHERN and SANTA FE RAILWAY COMPANY - ABANDONMENT-  
IN COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS

### BACKGROUND

In this proceeding, the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway Company (BNSF) has filed a petition under 49 U.S.C. 10502 seeking exemption from the requirements of 49 U.S.C. 10903 in connection with the abandonment and discontinuance of service of its switching/industrial lead trackage beginning north of Corwith Yard at Station 24+43 and ending at station 149+87 near the east end of the western Avenue Bridge, within the city limits of Chicago in Cook County, Illinois, a total distance of 2.38 miles. A map depicting the rail line in relationship to the area served is appended to the report. If the exemption becomes effective, the railroad will be able to salvage track, ties and other railroad appurtenances, and to dispose of the right-of-way.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE LINE

The trackage is used as an industrial lead serving two sets of locally owned business, International Cellulose (Intercel) and Crown Steel. Intercel is a scrap paper recycling facility that resells its product into the domestic and export market. Crown Steel is a steel distributor that buys and sells its commodity in the Chicago market. Carload traffic statistics show, Intercel and Crown Steel have shipped a total 71 and 113 cars respectively, in 1997 and 1998. The track is in very poor condition and classified as FRA Excepted Track. There are two bridges on the line, one built in 1898 and the other in 1973. Both patrons of the line have access to alternative transportation.

### ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The railroad has submitted an environmental report that concludes that the quality of the human environment will not be affected significantly as a result of the abandonment or any post-abandonment activities, including salvage and disposition of the right-of-way. The railroad has served the environmental report on a number of appropriate Federal, state, and local agencies as required by the Board's environmental rules at 49 CFR

1105.7(b). We have investigated the record in this proceeding. Also, we have consulted with appropriate agencies and individuals to verify the railroad's report and to obtain additional information and comments regarding the potential environmental effects of the proposed abandonment. Contacts have included Cook County Board of Commissioners; United States Department of Agriculture; Illinois Department of Natural Resources; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Endangered Species Consultation Program, Bureau of Land Management; Illinois Environmental Protection Agency; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; Department of Environment City of Chicago; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; Illinois Historic Preservation Agency; National Park Service and Illinois Department of Transportation.

#### **CONDITIONS**

The Illinois Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) has identified the Steel Span Truss Bridge constructed in 1898 that crosses the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal as eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under criterion A because of its association with the development of the railroad system in Chicago. Thus, we recommend that a condition be placed on any decision granting abandonment authority, requiring the railroad to retain its interest in and take no steps to alter the historic integrity of the Steel Span Truss Bridge until completion of the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act, 16 U.S.C. 470f.

In addition, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has not yet completed their review of the proposed abandonment and discontinuance. Therefore, we recommend that BNSF consult with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers prior to salvage or disposition of the right-of-way.

#### **CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, and subject to the recommended conditions, we conclude that, as currently proposed, abandonment of the line will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, the environmental impact statement process is unnecessary.

Alternatives to the proposed abandonment would include denial (and therefore no change in operations), discontinuance of service without abandonment, and continued operation by another operator. In any of these cases, the existing quality of the human environment and energy consumption should not be affected.

### **PUBLIC USE**

Following abandonment and salvage of the rail line, the right-of-way may be suitable for other public use. A request containing the requisite four-part showing for imposition of a public use condition (49 CFR 1152.28) must be filed with the Board and served on the railroad within the time specified in the Federal Register notice.

### **TRAILS USE**

A request for a notice of interim trail use (NITU) is due to the Board, with a copy to the railroad, within 10 days of publication of the notice of the petition for exemption in the Federal Register. Nevertheless, the Board will accept late-filed requests as long as it retains jurisdiction to do so in a particular case. This request must comply with the Board's rules for use of rights-of-way as trails (49 CFR 1152.29).

### **PUBLIC ASSISTANCE**

The Board's Office of Public Services (OPS) responds to questions regarding interim trail use, public use, and other reuse alternatives. You may contact OPS directly at (202) 565-1592, or mail inquiries to Surface Transportation Board, Office of Public Services, Room 848, Washington, DC 20423.

### **COMMENTS**

If you wish to file comments regarding this environmental assessment, you should send an **original and two copies** to Vernon A. Williams, Office of the Secretary, Room 711, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Bernard L. Brown, who prepared this environmental assessment. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-6 (Sub No. 382x) in all correspondence addressed to the Board.** If you have questions regarding this environmental assessment, you should contact Bernard L. Brown at (202) 565-1554 or Phillis Johnson-Ball at (202) 565-1530.

Date made available to the public: August 6, 1999.

Comment due date: September 1, 1999.

By the Board, Elaine K. Kaiser, Chief, Section of Environmental Analysis.

Vernon A. Williams  
Secretary



PLEASE SCAN MAP